Chapter 6 Case Study 3

Language Futures as KS3 in-curriculum alternative language provision

There are two schools involved in this case study. Whilst the LF model is not identical in each school, both schools aim to meet the learning needs of a cohort of students, who have previously struggled to make good progress in languages in the mainstream classroom. Therefore, the schools share both purpose and nature of student cohort.

6.1 The schools

Both schools in this case study are mixed gender secondary academies, part of a multi-academy trust in the East of England. School C is a larger than average secondary school with approximately 1000 students. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well below the national average and most students are White British. The proportion of students who need additional support with their learning; those at school action plus and those with a statement of special educational needs is broadly average. The school has a lower than average proportion of pupil premium students (pupil premium being additional funding for students known to be eligible for free school meals, those in local authority care and those with a parent in the armed services). In its last Ofsted inspection, the school was rated 'requires improvement', having previously been in special measures.

School D is also a larger than average secondary school with more than 1200 students. Rated 'outstanding' in its last Ofsted inspection, the school is now an established academy. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average. The proportion of pupil premium students is below average. A large majority of students are of White British heritage and very few students are at an early stage of learning English.

6.2 The Language Futures model

In School C there were two Year 8 (12-year old) LF classes, each with a different teacher. This study focused on one of these two classes. The study class had one hour of LF each week, and continued to have one hour of French. The LF teacher of the class was also their French teacher. The students were in their second year of learning French, having had two hours weekly during Year 7. School D had one class of LF, also a Year 8 class. In this model, students no longer had any conventional classroom language provision.

In terms of its design, this model of Language Futures set out to include all five core features of the approach. However, the specific nature of the cohort and, in one case, the school context, led to necessary compromises and adaptations, as follows:

Student choice and agency

In both schools, participation in the LF model itself was not optional. Students were selected by teachers, based on an evaluation of KS3 progress during Year 7. Selection for LF was implicitly also an early de-selection from KS4 languages, as it was not foreseen that students in these classes would go on to study for a GCSE in a foreign language.

Students in both schools were able to choose their language, however. Table 15 shows the number of students in each class and the languages chosen:

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Table 15 Schools C and D: LF languages and numbers of learners

School C		School D	
Language	**Number of learners**	**Language**	**Number of learners**
Italian	3	French	3
Japanese	3	German	2
Spanish	4	Japanese	3
		Spanish	9
Total no. of learners	10		17

In School D, the language learning was organised thematically following the same Scheme of Work as School A (Case Study 1), and included essential personal information, numbers, colours, food and drink, cultural festivals, free time and sport. However, as the LF teacher makes clear, the expectations for linguistic progression were modest, commensurate with the cohort:

"The curriculum is designed for students who have been judged as unable to access the languages curriculum within mainstream lessons. We are therefore promoting a curriculum that requires students to learn the languages at word level and possibly sentence level with the aim of promoting a love of language learning for less-able learners."

Table 16 presents an overview of the curriculum at the time of the study:

Table 16 School D LF curriculum summary

Grammar / Language structures	Vocabulary / Topic areas	Language learning skills	Projects
Vocabulary at word and sentence level	Introducing yourself, numbers, colours, food and drink, festivals (Christmas, Easter, Chinese New Year), free time, sport	Language learning strategies, Independent learning using web-based resources	Spoken presentation about self, Children's book, Film review, Recipe and cooking

School C took a different approach in terms of curriculum design. The main focus of the LF course is to facilitate the development of students' autonomy through project-based learning. Some of the learning is language-related, but substantial aspects of the course relate instead to the culture of the chosen target language country. Apart from choosing their language, students also choose who to work with, and how to fulfil each project brief. As the LF teacher explains, "The idea of student responsibility for their learning is consistently highlighted to students."

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Table 17 School C LF curriculum summary

Grammar / Language structures	Vocabulary / Topic areas	Knowledge about language	Language learning skills	Wider skills
Basic structures such as 'there is/there are' Answering simple questions	Key words for a phrase book Foods Transport Colours Rooms in the house Numbers	Thinking about English: Why learn another language? Where does English come from? How does a language 'die out' Links between languages. Words in English that come from other languages Links between French and others	Methods for vocabulary memorisation	Presentation skills Listening respectfully and asking meaningful questions to peers Peer assessment Self-assessment Computer skills Independent research and investigation Problem solving Geography History

Teacher as designer and facilitator

In school C the LF case study class had one teacher, who also taught the same students French each week. This teacher saw her role as fundamental to the development of learner autonomy. She designed the projects carefully, presenting them clearly to the students, but then very systematically adopted the practice of responding to students' questions with a question, continually confounding their attempts to rely too heavily on her. In her own words, her typical responses would be 'that's up to you!' 'It's your choice, how do you think you should do it?' This teacher had some previous LF experience, having been involved with it at her previous school, and having initiated the LF model at her new school the previous year.

School D's class had two teachers. This was for logistical, timetabling reasons although the LF teacher interviewed certainly felt it was beneficial to share the class, given the challenging nature of some of the students within it. The school had been running the LF programme for several years and the LF teacher had previous experience of teaching it. Despite broadly following school A's scheme of work, the teacher acknowledged that she needed to put considerable time into planning the tasks for students.

School as basecamp

As discussed in the introductory chapter of the report, an aspiration of Language Futures is that it generates intrinsic interest in and motivation for learning, such that students choose to pursue their learning beyond the classroom, as opposed to being set specific homework. This study explored the extent to which LF students in schools C and D engaged in out-of-class learning, as one measure of intrinsic motivation.

Project-based learning

In their LF lessons, learners in school C completed one project each half-term. Students kept the same language and country that they initially chose, and explored aspects of the language and culture within the framework of each project brief. Students chose who to work with and much of the learning involved the use of technology, enabling students to explore and investigate independently. In school D students completed language tasks of different lengths, relating to the

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key topic areas. They were encouraged to work independently, and with the support of their peers. Students had some access to computers, and they also had community mentors. Through teacher and student interview and teacher and student questionnaires this study explored the impact of project-based learning on student motivation, knowledge and skill development and overall progress.

Building a learning community

Affective support and linguistic scaffolding are key components of the LF classroom. Previous models of the project provide evidence that peer, mentor and parental support fulfil an important function.

In school C, this element of the programme was problematic. The LF teacher went to great lengths to recruit community mentors to the programme. Adverts were posted in the community, and on the school's social media sites (Twitter and Facebook), but there was no response. Despite having a sixth form, there was little interest from sixth form students. Initially there was a Teaching Assistant who worked with the group in a quasi-mentor role, although he subsequently left the school, too early in the course to have been able to have much of an impact on learning. The teacher also noted that students themselves were not yet resourceful or resilient enough to collaborate with and learn from each other in small groups. Parents were contacted and informed about the course objectives, and invited to take an active role in supporting their child's learning. There were no parental responses to that communication, although there was a certain level of tacit support from parents. Within this context, the teacher focused her efforts on developing learner autonomy and peer learning in the classroom, encouraging them to use websites to support out-of-class learning.

School D was able to recruit community mentors in French, German and Spanish, although not unfortunately for Japanese. However, the second LF teacher did have a basic level of competence in Japanese and was able to support learners to a certain extent. Parental involvement was deemed by the LF teacher to be minimal.

The extent to which learners made use of peer, mentor, parental and other support was a particular focus for the study and findings are reported in full, below.

6.3 The participants

The learners

At the time of data collection for this study there were 10 students in the school C study class, and school D had 17 LF students. Student background data from the teacher questionnaire indicate that almost all the students were ab initio learners of their LF language, although the three students learning French in school D had completed one year of prior learning. It is worth remembering that all students in this cohort were students who had been identified as struggling to make progress at KS3 in French. It is also noteworthy that of a total of 27 students, there were 22 boys and 5 girls. Table 18 summarises the student data:

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Table 18 Schools C and D LF learner profiles

School	Student	Age	Gender	LF language	LF language competence	Additional details
C	1	12	M	Japanese	AB	
C	2	12	M	Italian	AB	
C	3	12	M	Spanish	AB	
C	4	12	M	Japanese	AB	
C	5	12	F	Spanish	AB	
C	6	12	M	Spanish	AB	
C	7	12	M	Italian	AB	
C	8	12	F	Italian	AB	Bilingual Polish
C	9	12	M	Spanish	AB	
C	10	12	M	Japanese	AB	
D	1	12	M	Spanish	AB	
D	2	12	M	Japanese	AB	
D	3	12	M	Japanese	AB	
D	4	12	M	Japanese	AB	
D	5	12	M	French	F	
D	6	12	M	French	F	
D	7	12	M	Spanish	AB	
D	8	12	F	Spanish	AB	
D	9	12	F	Spanish	AB	
D	10	12	M	Spanish	AB	
D	11	12	M	Spanish	AB	
D	12	12	M	Spanish	AB	
D	13	12	M	Spanish	AB	
D	14	12	M	French	F	
D	15	12	M	German	AB	
D	16	12	F	German	AB	
D	17	12	M	Spanish	AB	

Language competence codes	
Absolute beginner	AB
Foundation – 1-2 years classroom-based prior learning	F
Intermediate – 3-4 years classroom-based prior learning	I
Advanced – 5+ years classroom-based prior learning	A
Community speaker with no or limited literacy	HS
Community speaking with some literacy	HS+

Interviews were conducted in each school on two separate occasions (February and June). One LF lesson in each school was observed in February, and a further lesson in June in school D.

The teacher

The Language Futures teacher in school C was a full-time teacher of languages at the school. She had initiated and been in charge of the school's LF programme since its launch the previous year, and, as previously mentioned, was passionate about developing her students' autonomy. School D's LF

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teacher was a long-established languages teacher at her school, with previous experience of running the LF course. Two interviews were conducted with the LF teacher in school C, one in February and the other in June. For logistical reasons, it was only possible to interview the LF teacher in school D once, in June.

The mentors

School C did not have mentors. School D's German mentor was interviewed in February. Unfortunately, through pressures of work, she dropped out of the programme and was therefore not available for interview later in the study. Table 19 shows the interview sample from both schools in the study:

Table 19 Schools C and D Interviews

	School C	**School D**
LF teacher	February / June	June
LF students	February (2 students – one girl, one boy) June (4 students – three girls, one boy)	February (2 students – two girls) June (2 students – one girl, one boy)
LF mentor	--	February (German mentor)

The parents

Parents of students in the programme were informed about their child's language provision in school, and were kept informed via the school report, in the same way as they received information about progress in all other subjects, although they did not receive an attainment level or target for their LF course. Despite generally low levels of parental engagement reported in both schools, there were individual stories that confounded this norm, and are explored in further detail, below.

6.4 Analysis and findings

The analysis and findings in this chapter are organised around the overarching research questions, drawing on thematic analysis of all of the data sources, focusing first on linguistic progress, mindful of the modest aspirations for progress explicit in this LF model. As students were selected for this mode of learning precisely as a result of the difficulties they encountered in language learning in the mainstream classroom, it was very relevant to explore students' comparative perceptions. Finally, there is an account of the range of factors that impact on the LF approach within this particular model.

6.4.1 Linguistic progress

The student questionnaire responses below, which included responses from both school C and D, were completed approximately four months into the course. At this stage, more than half of the students considered that they had mastered a productive repertoire of 10 words or fewer, with most of the rest estimating a vocabulary of around 25 words, with just one or two believing they could remember more than 50 words.

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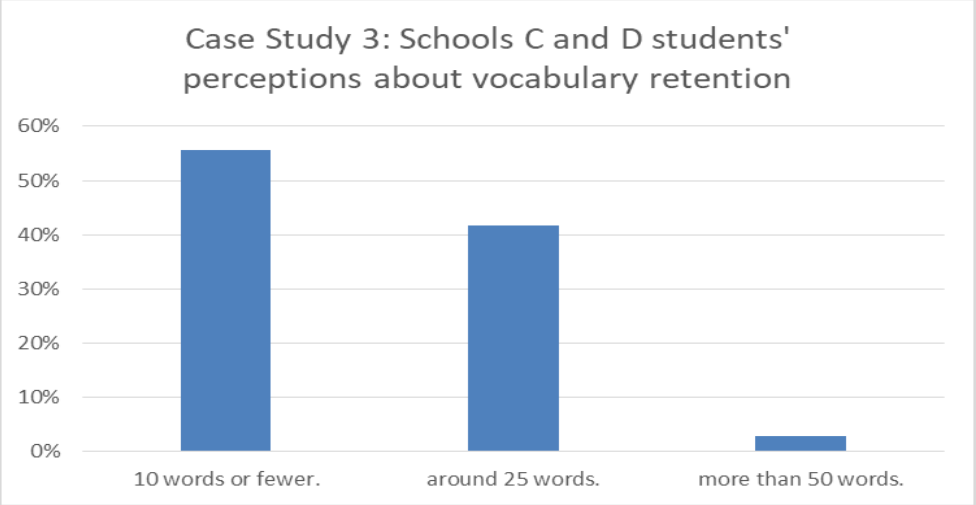
Figure 24 Student perceptions of vocabulary mastery



These perceptions are supported by interview data from students, mentor and teachers, all of which confirm difficulties with retention of language, particularly over time.

Table 20 Perceptions about vocabulary retention

Retention	Student	Teacher	Mentor
School C	"I can kind of speak the basics if I have it in front of me and I can say my name and my age and all the emergency things if they're in front of me, coz I've researched it all up and it's all on paper"	"In terms of language it is very basic so er… I think more in terms of recognising similarities between say French and the language they're learning, if there are any, or recognising how different a language can be, in terms of Japanese."	
School D	"I usually when I first know the words I can remember it very well but when we get further like four days I can't really remember it that well" "Well we wrote a little paragraph about ourself and we showed it to the class, and er… it was I can't really me llamo Annie, erm I can't really remember how to say to do it but I can remember the sport, it's the same" "Well when I walk into the lesson I usually get like my Spanish mind on and I usually think what we did last lesson and	"Well in terms of this group obviously they are the low ability students, so in terms of actually using the language, they might be able to say one or two words"	"I mean they don't always retain everything by any stretch of the imagination but you know there are things that they remember, like funny little things that they remember from one day to the next"

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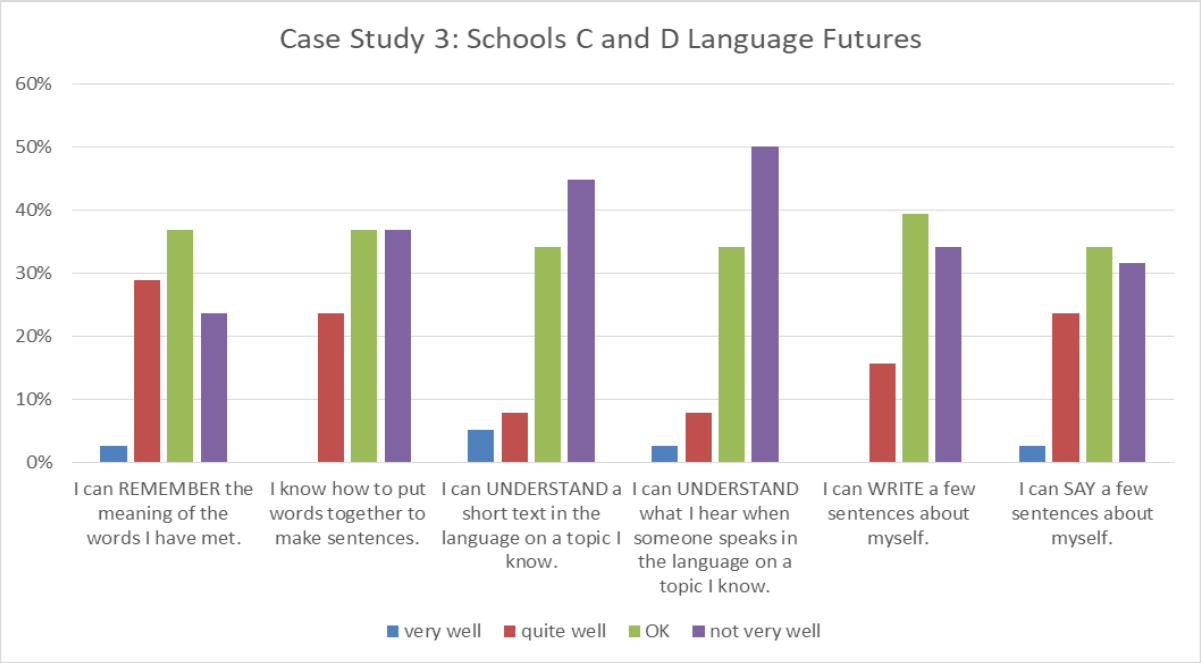
	coz if we do, do it again that lesson I will remember it very well so you know I'll have to learn it again"		

The profile of student perceptions of competence across the four skills (Figure 25, below) represents relatively low levels of perceived competence across all skills, particularly when compared with other LF cohorts (cf. Figure 5, Case Study 1; Figure 18, Case Study 2). The data reflect the lower attainment, and learning needs, of students within this LF cohort.

Figure 25 Students' perceptions of their competence in the four skills



That said, these data veil a much richer picture of experience, which is better captured and revealed by the individual stories in the interview data. One student from school D, when asked what he had been learning recently, mentioned telling the time:

Interviewer: How to tell the time, ok. So can you tell me any of those, can you tell me any Spanish words that come into your head?
Student: So hello is hola in Spanish. Erm que hora es [aspirated 'h'] is how you say what is the time, what else
Interviewer: Do you know how to answer that?
Student: So que hora es you could say like son las cuatro y media is half past four

Another student from school D, who started the year learning German but switched to Spanish when her German mentor was unable to continue, was asked to recall what she could from five months earlier in the year:

Interviewer: OK, so can you still remember anything in German?
Student: I can still remember one to ten, and I can still remember a tiny bit of like what the like animals are, just a couple of them, and some colours
Interviewer: OK, can you remember to say, can you remember anything to say like My name is, or I

am thirteen or something like that
Student: I can remember like 'Hi I am 'and stuff like that
Interviewer: Say anything that you can remember at all and I know you haven't been doing it for six months
Student: Ich [pronounced ick] heisse Ella I can say like one to ten quite easily like
Interviewer: Do you want to just do that
Student: Un, no, eins zwei drei vier fünf sechs sieben acht neun zehn

One further powerful pen portrait of another student's progress is provided by school D's LF teacher: "she did a presentation where she stood up and spoke about herself for a good two to three minutes in Spanish, this is a girl who was dis-applied from languages after Y7, that really we thought she's never going to manage, and I really then almost I didn't teach her last year but I just thought why is she in my group this year because she shows such a flair for it, and really she has all year and a lot of it has stuck with her and I think she said I could never, in Y7 she hated language lessons and she couldn't be in the classroom with all those people but once she got herself and working with her mentor and working on her own and at her own pace she said she's just loved this year"

This student herself referred to how she prepared for her spoken presentation:
Student: Er…, my easiest way of learning is to write it down and to be able to see it, and er… try and read it as much as I can with it there, and get it into my head, and then try and push myself to do it without the book, when I was doing my presentation to the class, I read for a couple of weeks my book and then me and my teacher were going through it and doing it without my booklet and she was asking me the questions and I would answer it
Interviewer: All in Spanish?
Student: Yeah.

In terms of student retention of language, these data show that these students were managing to retain some language over time, and that a few students were able to produce sentence-level utterances from memory. Exceptionally, there were also students who showed more ability, and made considerably more progress in LF, particularly when compared to their Y7 learning experiences. Equally important are the indications that students invested significant effort into their learning, that students developed meta-cognitively as well as linguistically, and that they were motivated by and proud of their learning. It is also worth noting that opportunities for multiple cycles of repetition, followed by mentor and teacher feedback appear to be associated with more successful learning.

Another aspect of linguistic progress concerns pronunciation. Other models of LF have indicated that pronunciation and speaking are often under-developed, even where there is regular mentor support. This study's findings resonate with those of previous studies:

Interviewer: Can they express themselves at all in sentences?
Mentor: Not really. A few sort of formulas that we've learned, but they, that's not really the kind of language learning that they do when I'm not here, coz they have three lessons a week and I'm only here for one of them, and I think putting things together certainly orally is still a bit beyond them. They have done some writing, so they wrote a postcard to somebody and they were able to put things together there, so, but it's still quite basic, really.

Progress in pronunciation is also tentative:
Mentor: they are getting more confident at pronunciation although that is still a bit of a challenge, and I do still have to remind them that a W says V and a V says F and we're still having to do that every time but they are getting a little more confident about it

Inevitably, perhaps, more time is spent writing than speaking:

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Student: In the hobbies topic we spoke a bit about sport and er…the hobbies that you do, as in like tv shows and what you do after school so we did er.. we did sports afternoon daytime and we did like a time plan so I did my like morning routine so at school, and then after school I do a little bit of sport and then er… just do videogames and YouTube and all that but we wrote like a booklet in Spanish so we had to write everything in Spanish.

That said, individual differences also played a part in determining progress in speaking the language. In particular there were several boys who made the most of every opportunity to speak:

School C LF teacher: so James here just seems particularly strong, but he also loves to talk, so he will be one, even a French lesson, he's always got his hand up, he's got no fear of getting it wrong, he'll just go for it, and he'll do exactly the same with the Spanish, even though he's not hearing anyone say it, he'll see the word on the page and just try saying, which of course in Spanish is very easy…quite surprised even at David the way he comes out with some Japanese pronunciation, which I don't even know if it's right, but you know, he's confident to go for it, but again he's a very chatty one especially in front of the class, he loves an audience.

School D LF teacher: there are two other boys who have done really well Felix who also wasn't here today he's really thrived you know coming into language futures I hadn't high expectations but I thought his ability to speak Spanish you know when I hear him at the end of a mentor session it's absolutely fantastic I'm really amazed but he does speak another language at home I'm not sure what it is

This contrasts with the reticence of some of the girls:
"neither of the other two girls will speak up, not particularly in French, and definitely not in their new language"

Overall, findings show that progress was evident, but slow, particularly in speaking, and that long-term retention of language was a particular challenge.

6.4.2 Perceptions of other aspects of progress in LF

When seeking to evaluate the benefits of this LF model, however, it is important to include additional aspects of development that emerged from the data, in particular: cultural knowledge and self-esteem.

Cultural knowledge

The school C LF teacher explicitly targeted aspects of learning in addition to language learning itself, partly as a consequence of not having any community mentors. As she explains:

"it's been much more cultural in terms of what they're able to achieve and their cultural understanding has risen a lot, but also their cross-curricular skills so for example we were in the cooking room last week cooking dishes from around the world, which I 'm sure they'll tell you about, which was a great success, and independent research, sticking to a deadline, things like that"

Students obviously enjoyed researching cultural aspects of countries where their chosen language was spoken. They retained particular details that had piqued their interest, sometimes taking even the interviewer by surprise:

Student: Well like there's a lot of street food so there's a lot like stuff on the street that you can just eat and watch people make there's a lot of weird like things as well like I saw this like they have square watermelons
Interviewer: Square what?
Student: Square watermelons like the shape of them is like a big square it's well weird

Wider skills
Students in school C also spent the first half-term exploring English, which included work on cognates, shared and borrowed words. The teacher felt this to be both interesting and useful to her students:

"they were actually really really into it and fascinated about how many words we have from other languages in English, and their knowledge of just English in general and how languages are inter-related just shot up so that was quite a good hook as well into language futures for them."

In addition, students developed their general world knowledge and softer communication skills, such as audience and presentation skills, which their teacher felt were learning needs not being met elsewhere in the curriculum:

"I just think with students like this the benefit of doing a course like this where you have the opportunity to focus in on actually just spending time you know speaking in front of the class, listening to each other, sending an email, is so valuable, I just think if they're not getting this anywhere else…"

Stakeholders' comparative perceptions of LF and conventional classroom language learning
Perhaps the most significant finding of this case study is that in both study schools, previously demotivated, and in many cases quite disruptive, learners displayed much more positive attitudes to learning in general, and learning languages in particular, leading one of the LF teachers to conclude:

"We think it is hugely successful in terms of pupil engagement, positivity towards languages, the culture of languages, that kind of thing"

This view was corroborated by the students' responses. When asked to rank LF as one of her subjects, one student said that it would be second favourite after PE, but that French would definitely be at the very bottom. This student was from school C, and was learning French and participating in LF with the same teacher.

This study has identified several factors that are associated positively with LF and contrasted with mainstream language learning experiences by all of the main stakeholders. These are pace of learning, small group learning (with mentor support), the lack of assessment pressure, content and learning methods. These in turn are implicated in the higher levels of confidence and self-esteem described by students. These data are displayed in the table below:

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Table 20 Factors positively associated with LF and in contrast to mainstream classroom

	Students	Teacher / Mentor	Mentor
Pace	"I feel like it's made my learning a lot easier because when I was doing the language before in French I was finding it hard because my teacher would go very fast and I with the mentors and the new class I'm in I feel like it's easier because you can talk to her individually about your language … and easier to er learn about what you need to learn about instead of having to rush and forget about everything that you've learnt." "if I did two French lessons a week I would just probably like get all confused with the words, coz they just move on really quick, but with LF you can just like take your time with the work, coz it's like up to you and if you run out of time then you run out of time, but coz you're going at your own pace, you don't have to worry about moving on quickly coz you've got other people doing different languages so it doesn't really matter how long you take to try and find something"	"I think there's enough it was very worrying at the beginning of the year when I saw this all about me leisure food I was thinking I'll have done this by October half term but it's amazing how much you can pack in you can take all the nice bits and do it in a lot more detail and very slowly which suited them."	"I think what I'm doing is sort of sustaining a pattern of language learning, and also just making it a bit more fun and a bit more relaxed than any other lesson that they have, and I mean quite often we have conversations about things that have happened in other lessons. I think they're both people who for different reasons find being in the classroom quite difficult at times. Yeah, so it's just about kind of making it a bit more I don't know relaxed, informal"
Small group / mentor support	"In year 7 I wasn't doing too well, but in Y8 I feel like I've really done a lot better than I was, because my teacher said to me when I did my presentation half-term, she said I might have to move up in grades because I was doing really well for the class I was in, so I feel like the way we're doing it now instead of all in one class I feel like the tutors are a lot easier to learn with than in a class." "and you don't have to like raise your hand coz I'm like quite a shy person in class so I don't have to raise my hand and she'll just help you, and		

	this year where I've been doing I feel like I've been better because I've been able to ask if I've stuck whereas in lesson I feel like it's a little bit embarrassing but I overcame that so I'm glad about that and now it's easier to talk to her" "It's kind of changed me for my languages because when I was more in like a bit class I'd normally be shy to like to say out anything just in case I got it wrong and now like in LF I can say it even if I get it wrong and it doesn't really matter coz she'll help us learn a bit more" "Erm it's just an easier way of learning for me because yeah, it's made me overcome a lot of fears between putting my hand up and now I know that other people are thinking the same thing as me and other people are in the same situation so they don't so now I don't feel like I'm odd or and I know that people sit there with their like wanting to put their hand up but they're too afraid to, when you're in a big classroom you don't really expect that you just think that you're the one sitting waiting but other people are actually there as well wanting to do that but they can't coz they feel afraid, but now I know that other people want to do that I feel like I can put my hand up and like try and persuade other people to as well."		
Lack of assessment pressure		"And also the end goals are not so time-constricted well we can't spend half an hour trying to work around this problem coz we have to have achieved this level of language by the end of this lesson to move on to the module to be assessed. And so you do end up I don't think spoon-	"I'm not testing them, I'm not assessing them or setting them target grades or anything, so I think we all feel we can be just a little bit more informal about that."

		feeding's necessarily the word for what we do, but you have to say because of the structure of LF we're very independent and we can sort of decide how long we want to spend on anything if we want an extra couple of lessons we can which is just not possible in normal teaching time and with an assessment coming up at the end" "Freed up from the usual curriculum, we were able to spend valuable time looking at how English works and why so many languages exist which even created some exciting moments of discussion which was great for this class."	
Themes	"Yeah, because in Spanish lessons we've been learning like about pacific places like Barcelona and Madrid and I want to be going to those kind of places like for real"	"I said to them when I was introducing the whole parts of the body I said if we go to Spain and we go to the beach and you get sunburnt or you have earache that's something you need to know so it's very practical, it's not really a very nice topic to teach necessarily but I think they can then see the value of it"	
Learning methods	"Better than French because you're a lot freer, you can decide how you want to do things. We like working on computers."	"I think the whole practicality of it at this level helps it stick with them I think if they make their own menus and then they order with the mentor and they're playing their role plays of course that's going to stick more … and I just think that's very valuable at their level but just not always achievable in your GCSE class Y9 dual class or whatever"	

6.4.4 Key factors that impact on the LF approach

To explore the relative impact of different LF features on this LF model, data were triangulated from student questionnaires as well as student, teacher and mentor interviews.

Choice

Students in schools C and D chose their language of study in this model, although they did not choose to take part in the programme. Interview and teacher questionnaire data confirm the importance of language choice. Interestingly, even when some students give apparently shallow and

unconvincing reasons for their choice of language, it does not dent their loyalty to it. It seems that the simple fact that it was their choice sets up an unwritten, yet clearly discernible, commitment to the chosen language.

As the LF teacher from school C explains: "Student choice is very important and gives them responsibility and accountability for following through with their decisions. They have risen to this challenge."

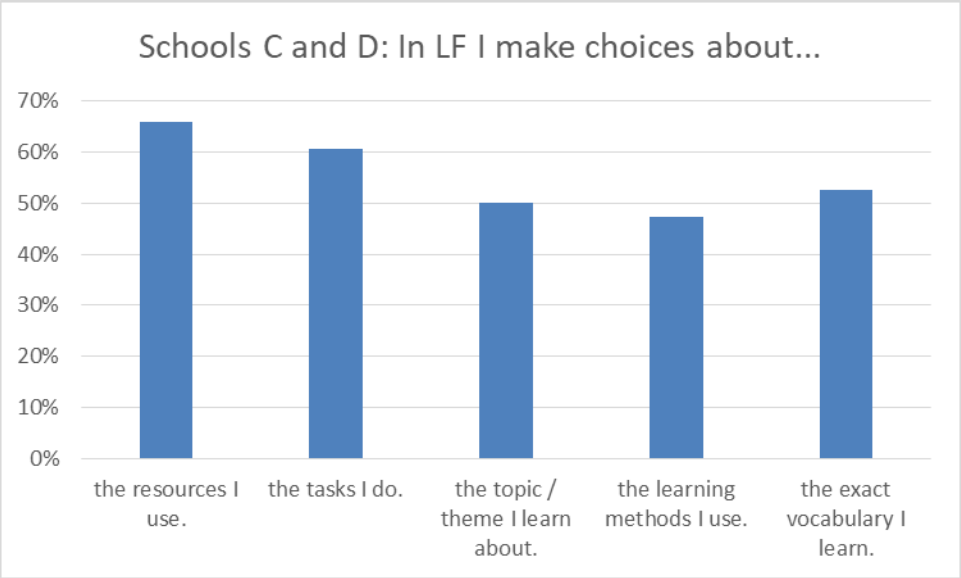
For other students, the strength of interest in the chosen LF language is even more convincing:

Student: I do it on my own, but miss helps me if I can't do something, and then when I when I was little I wanted to speak Italian so
Interviewer: Are you as interested in it now as you were when you started?
Student: No
Interviewer: Are you not?
Student: I'm more interested now

It is particularly noteworthy that this commitment is sustained in school C despite the lack of any community mentors to foster ongoing cultural and linguistic interest.

In terms of student perceptions about freedom in lessons, the student questionnaire responses reveal that some but not all students believe they have complete freedom of choice in their learning:

Figure 26 Schools C and D: students' perceptions of choice in LF language learning



However, it is not possible to discover from the questionnaire data whether students might be restricted in their choice of resources, for example, simply due to a lack of availability, rather than any degree of teacher prescription. The interview data illuminate further the picture of learning choice in both schools. As regards resources, for example, both LF teachers point to restrictions in terms of access to new technologies, either because of logistical rooming issues, outdated equipment or even whole school restrictions to the use of headphones:

"We don't have to have headphones because it's just we don't allow… that technology has been stopped in the school so we don't have phones and all that sort of thing any more so I would play and they repeat but they're not all working terribly much at their own pace for the sounds. I do have headphones which I allow out but we share them and they have a certain amount of time where

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they can listen to words and then I move that on, sort of trying to keep in line with school policy but at the same time I think it's important that they have the headphones for the sounds coz I can't do that."

These practical considerations may impact on students' perceptions of choice, as well as their ability to work autonomously, but it is important to recognise the difference between this and more intentional teacher direction.

In terms of freedom of task, one student in school D describes being set tasks in very positive terms:

Interviewer: Do you think that the way that you learn in LF is an effective way to learn?
Student: I think it's really effective because you get given loads of tasks and although you're put to do them, they're like they're for you to learn, they're there for you to help your understanding so if you get given a task your tutors are there, but the tasks that you're given are set to your standard so they work bit by bit and try and not go too far in one section of time so you work your way up to your score, like we get given a grade and we have to work our way up to it gradually

Yet again, the lack of time pressure and support from mentors emerge as key factors associated with positive learning experiences.

Overall, the commitment to developing choice and, in school C, to the development of autonomy in particular, is clear: "Students are given a task e.g. create a draft for your phrasebook, but many of their questions are answered with 'that's up to you!' 'It's your choice, how do you think you should do it?' etc. They choose what vocabulary they find in their language and within the task they have as much autonomy as possible."

The positive response to choice is typified by the response of this student, who was asked if and why he would recommend LF, and responded: "you get to choose whatever you want, do whatever you want to choose, you get to do different things, you get to pick what you do, so that's pretty cool."

Autonomy

As mentioned, the LF teacher in school C was particularly concerned to develop learner autonomy, seeing it as an acute need for students in the context of her school: "even the thought of even just on your own going and finding something out about the world is just such a foreign concept to them, it's like 'well why would I do such a thing' there's no curiosity, and like we struggle here with aspiration here in this school, it's linked to curiosity, isn't it"

She therefore deliberately focused on students' ability to work autonomously, and built an assessment thereof into the students' self-assessment progress record sheet. Basic problem-solving, with even the simplest of decisions, was something she was keen to improve:

"A big part of my approach I think for these students in particular is problem-solving coz they've got no resilience and they're used from year 7 to 'miss shall I start a new page' miss how do I glue it in' 'miss, my computer's not working' and it's just exhausting what they just will not attempt on their own, and so this kind of like refusing to answer a question and the problem-solving is actually… because I think it's a massive problem in the generation of kids that we're raising."

Despite working from a relatively low starting point in terms of student autonomy, there was evidence not only that students were showing signs of emergent autonomy by taking responsibility for their project work, but also that they took some pride in doing so:

Student: We've made up like booklets like about festivals I done this ice festival about ice sculpture
Interviewer: A festival of ice sculpture

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Student: Yeah, what they do is like every year I'm guessing in the winter they um like build sculptures up out of ice and there's like a big festival it's actually mad but yeah but I made like a leaflet about that
Interviewer: So you did the whole leaflet about the ice festival
Student: Yeah I done like two pages of writing just about that and I made the front cover and that, so pretty cool

However, as we have noted with other aspects of progress, individual differences continued to play a role. As the school C LF teacher commented:

"I think those differences come from ability to work independently be self-motivated some love it and the difference between their French lesson and their LF lesson is that they hate French and they love LF because they love the freedom of it and driving themselves, there are others that find that very difficult to deal with and struggle to stay focused in the lesson, struggle to get moving with the project, because they haven't been told exactly what to do, so yeah it's very noticeable the ones that manage it, the ones that don't so much, yeah"

School D's LF programme was predominantly focused on task-based language learning. Whilst students did do some independent learning, autonomy was not necessarily an explicit goal. This student's description of learning gives a sense of the pattern of learning:

Interviewer: When someone says I want you to learn about numbers, I want you to learn about foods, I want you to learn about time, what do you do? What's the way you go about it?
Student: Well I you know I obviously do do a task, mm, …
Interviewer: So what do you do? Is it your mentor who says this is what you're gonna do?
Student: So usually our teacher sets us a task, and we're like we go on the computers to learn about it on linguascope but sometimes the mentors call me to like say ok we're going do this activity here, so we do it on paper rather than on the computer

A key difference that emerged between the LF models in these two schools, therefore, was that school C prioritised autonomy, and students developed this through project-based learning, with a very limited amount of language, whilst school D focused more on language learning, through tasks rather than projects, and with more direction from the teacher and/or mentor. To this extent, neither school fulfilled entirely on the LF paradigm, but both schools adapted their models to fit their circumstances and achieve their learning objectives.

Project-based learning
There have already been several references in this case study to the significance of project-based learning, particularly from teacher and students in school C, where it was fundamental to the teacher's focus on developing learning autonomy. Student questionnaire data from schools C and D in Figure 27 present the response to the statement, "In Language Futures we learn through projects". The vast majority of students in this cohort believes that project-based learning was a significant part of their LF learning.

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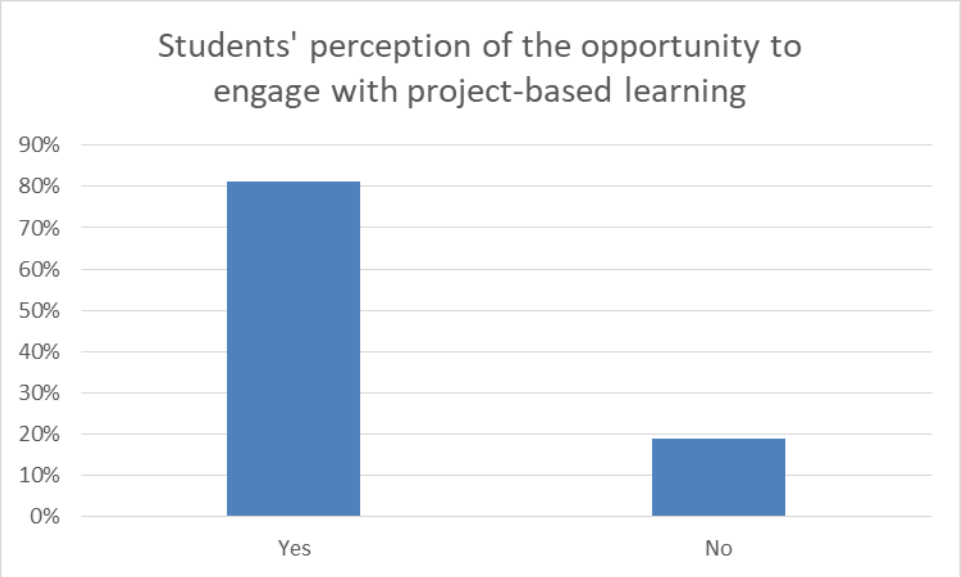
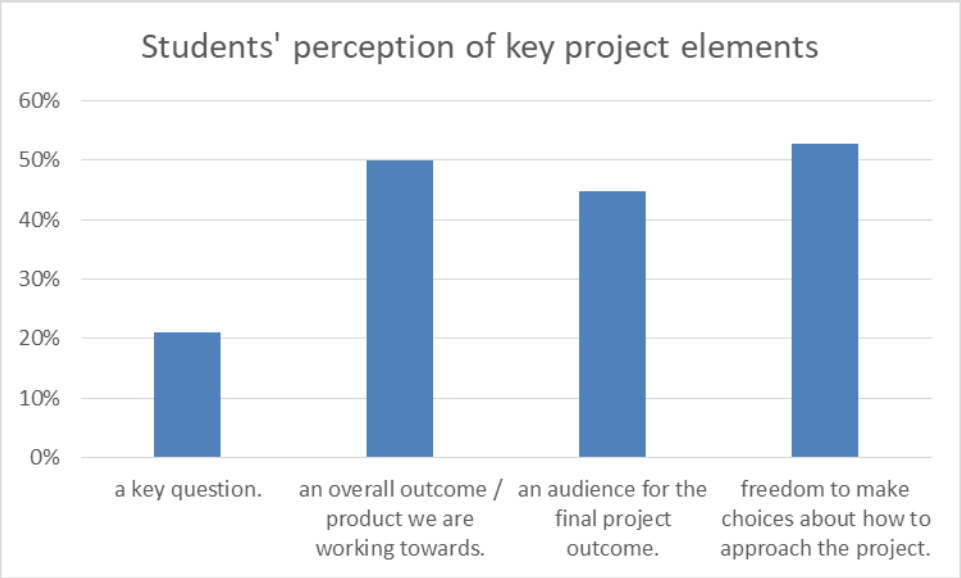
Figure 27 School C and D students' perceptions of engagement with PBL



Students were then asked to indicate the presence of any of these key project elements. Nearly half of the respondents believed their project work was focused on an end product, which had an audience, and involved choices in terms of how to learn. Only one-fifth of the group felt there was a key question guiding the project. It is important to remember that these data collate responses from two LF models, which, whilst sharing many features, did take a somewhat different approach to PBL, with school C giving it rather more prominence than school D.

Figure 28 School B Students' perceptions of key project elements



Nevertheless, the student and teacher interview data from both schools suggest that the aspect of the project-based and task-based ways of working which was pivotal to raising students' motivation and increasing their sense of success was the freedom to work at their own pace. This is a recurring theme in the data from this case study, but is also supported by findings in case study 1.

The questionnaire data suggest that a significant number of students found the projects fun and interesting, but also challenging:

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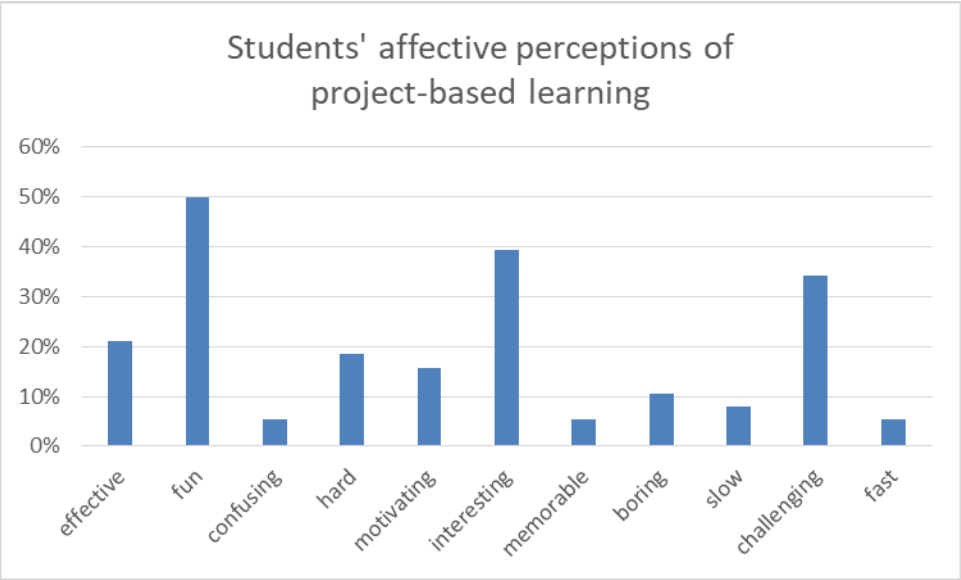
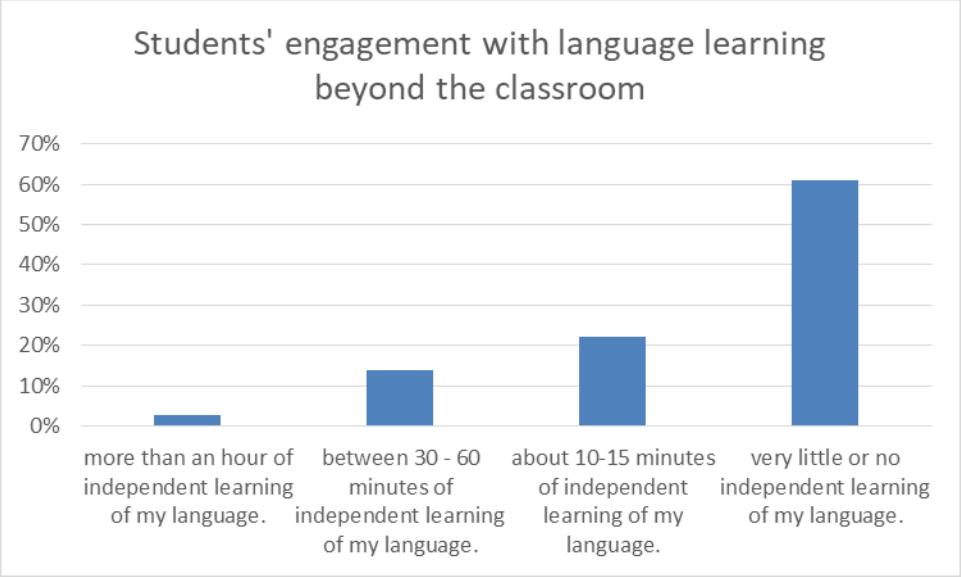
Figure 29 School B Students' affective perceptions of project-based learning



School as basecamp

In all previous studies of Language Futures, out-of-class learning has been significantly under-developed. Predictably, perhaps, a majority of learners in this LF cohort reported doing very little or no independent learning beyond the classroom:

Figure 30 School B Time spent on out-of-class learning



Both LF teachers' reflections corroborate this. Learning beyond the classroom was cited as the least developed aspect of Language Futures, notwithstanding the total absence of mentors from school C. Whilst they were one or two individual students who did choose to do more, these were exceptions.

Community of learning

Surrounding learners with multiple layers of support for**,** and interest in**,** their language learning is a core feature of LF. The support is seen to come from parents, mentor, the LF teacher and peer learning. In this case study, nothing could be taken for granted in this respect. LF teachers reported their struggle to get parents involved in LF. In school C the LF teacher attributed the generally low

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student expectations to a pattern of low parental expectations:

"I think in general it's considered by quite a few parents around here to be like 'oh well, you do it but who cares' and consistently the comment at parents' evening, I'm sure you've had this too, is always 'oo you can order the coffees when we're in Spain' as if that's the only reason you would ever learn a language…the concept of it being like a) a good subject for your CV and b) being a good subject for your job prospects regardless of the job pretty much, is just completely unknown not just to kids but to parents".

School D's teacher points to a more positive level of support from parents, generally, but low interest in language learning:

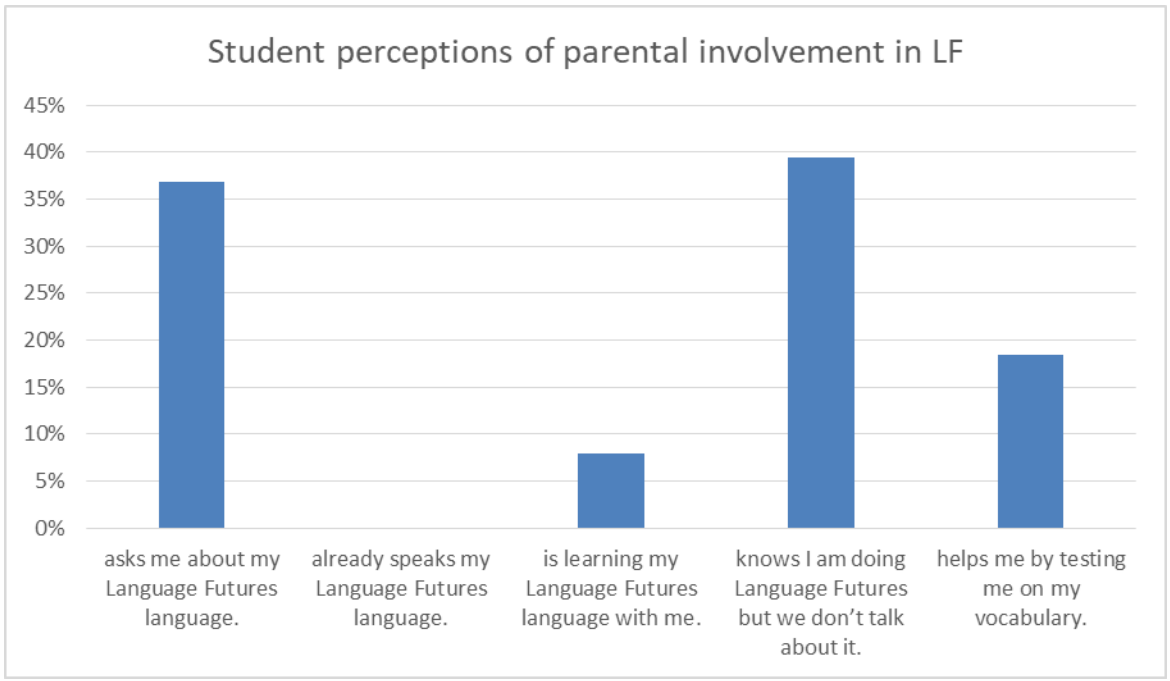
"Parental involvement er…well I'm afraid for languages it's very mixed I mean parents are generally supportive but of all other subjects before, sadly."

Despite these limitations, there were some signs that parents were positive about LF, that they showed some interest, and even in a few cases showed active support for learning. In school C, one positive turning point was a parents evening, at which the LF teacher was able to tell parents in person about the aims of the programme. She mentioned that parents were particularly on board with the cross-curricular elements:

"when I've chatted to parents on parents evening and I've said the importance of the different kinds of projects we do, the skills they're using, you know we did a planning a trip abroad, and the parents loved that one, because the kids couldn't believe like is that how much it costs, and you know just that awareness of like what's a visa do you need a visa I know what a visa is it's what you pay your credit card with no it's not just that you know that kind of thing you know their worldliness has hopefully increased, so yeah"

Student questionnaire data suggest that more than a third of parents showed interest by asking their children about LF, whilst a few did actively support with learning.

Figure 31 School C and D Parental involvement in LF



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This pattern of involvement is confirmed in the student interview data. Some students talk with their parents about LF:

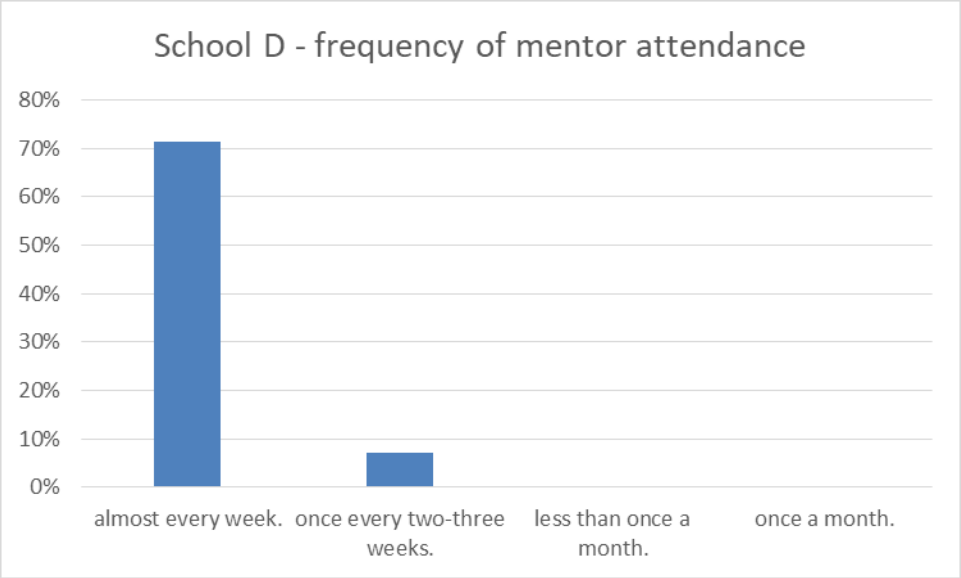
Interviewer: Do you talk to her about it?
Student: Yeah, sometimes, I ask her there's no point me asking her anything she ain't gonna know anything about Japanese but like I tell her things and she finds it quite interesting

In school C, the project to research a recipe and prepare a dish from the target language country was particularly useful for generating interest from parents. In addition, student interview data also reveal individual cases where parents were a little more actively involved:

Interviewer: Let's talk about outside lesson time, er… what do you do to learn your language outside of lesson time?
Student: Well my mum and her partner at the minute quite often go to Spain so sometimes they will sit down with me and talk about it and see if I can teach them some sorts of bits and we go through it together and we bring my book home and talk about the new things I learn in the day.

In order to explore the impact of mentoring, the data from school C and D were separated out, as only school D had community mentors. Figure 32 below shows that students felt they had a high level of mentor support, with around three quarters of students reporting weekly mentor attendance.

Figure 32 School D Student perceptions of mentor attendance



In terms of how they felt most supported by their mentor, the majority of students highlighted speaking and pronunciation as key areas. The majority of students also felt they learnt more when their mentor was with them.

Figure 33 School D Student perceptions of mentor support

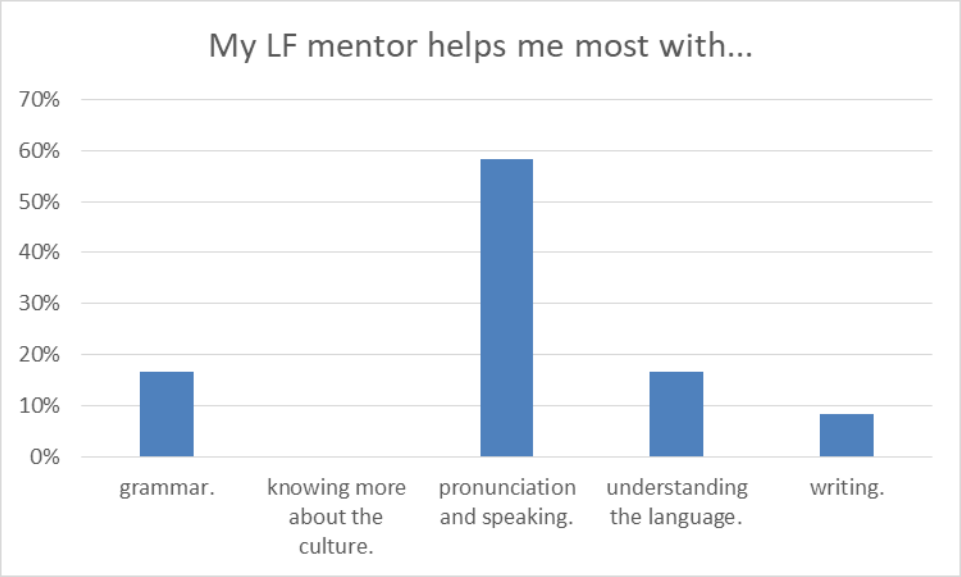
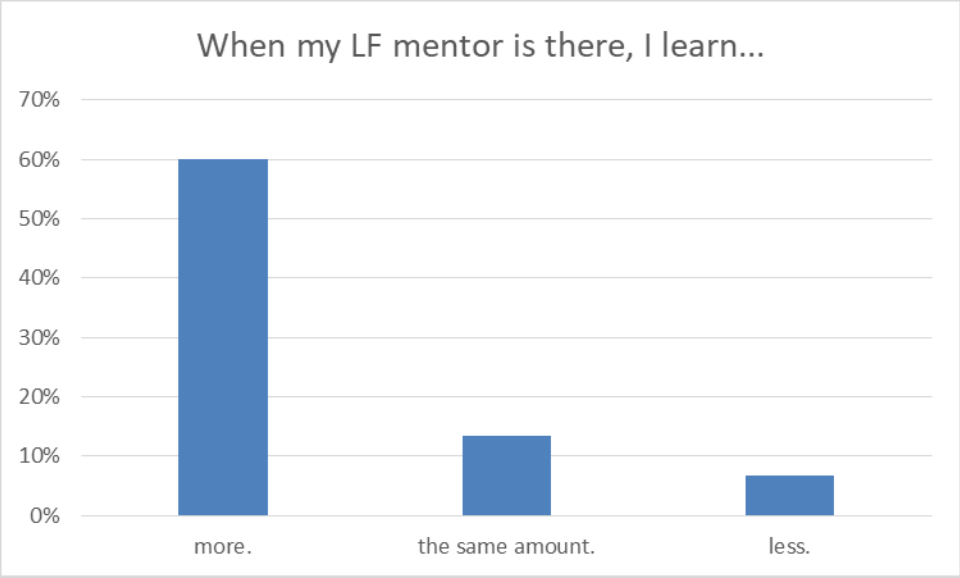


Figure 34 School D Student perceptions of own learning with mentor support



6.5 Conclusion

The overall findings of this case study present a model of LF in which several of its key features are under-developed, namely school as basecamp (both schools), project-based learning and autonomy (school D), and key components of building a learning community, including parental engagement (both schools) and mentoring (school C). Nevertheless, students display a much more positive orientation towards their learning, including their language-specific learning, as a result of their LF experiences than they have towards their language learning in a conventional classroom. The main contributing factors are: the choice of language, the freedom to learn at their own pace, the open-ended learning implicit in projects and tasks, and in school D, the support of mentors. Freed up from the pressure (and associated anxiety) of learning specific language content at a set rate of progress,

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students show that they are capable of modest growth in linguistic competence over time, that they are more confident in their learning, and predictably, that they enjoy it more.

With the current government expectation that 90% students nationally continue with a foreign language to GCSE, this case study raises several questions.

First, to meet the government expectations, the cohort of students continuing with languages at KS4 will need to diversify across the ability range. It would almost certainly include a proportion of the learners within this study. It is clear that these learners have had significant difficulties with their KS3 learning prior to taking part in Language Futures. It is also clear that positive learning experiences are vital for creating and maintaining the motivation needed to sustain language learning through KS3 and KS4. It would seem useful to ask, therefore, whether it would be possible to increase student engagement in language learning at KS3 by applying any of the findings from this case study to the mainstream languages classroom. This question is explored fully in the final chapter of the report.

With this question in mind, though, it is interesting to take account of the range of different students' responses within this case study, when asked whether they would like to do GCSE. Some students were still a little doubtful about their abilities. For example:
"It's a maybe coz at this time I can't really remember how to speak a language but maybe in the future I could probably remember and get the words stuck in my head."

Another student indicates the change in her view, after her participation in Language Futures:

Interviewer: Do you think at some point you'd like to study for GCSE or anything like that?
Student: Well, I was thinking about it, I do have a lot of options but I haven't really decided which ones yet. I think I'm going to choose my main ones first that I want to take as a job, but I really am looking for doing Spanish, I did at first say that I wasn't really too sure about doing it, but now I think I feel that I want to do it because I feel like I've gotten really good at the language that I want to keep doing something that I'm good at and enjoy.

This student perception is more remarkable, when we consider that these students were already aware that they would not be actively encouraged to take a language at KS4. She was not the only student who began to re-consider her option choices. One of the school D mentors refers to the experiences of another student:
"it's just a bit sad that this is someone who's got some enthusiasm for language learning which is not something that he would have thought of doing before and obviously not something he was brilliant at beforehand and the only other option available to him as his next step is to do GCSE which would be more formal and more assessed, and I just think he'll find it difficult, and then I also think what that will mean he'll lose a lot of the enthusiasm that he kind of built up this year, and I just think, that's just a bit, that's just a bit sad really."

In addition to the evidence of the affective impact of LF on the students in this case study, this comment also raises the concern of teachers and mentors that GCSE may undermine the positivity and motivation that they have seen develop as a result of LF. This raises a second important question as to why it is not possible to value other forms of language qualification in this country. There is a widespread view that GCSE does not ideally meet the learning needs of all learners. The findings in this study add further weight to the argument for re-instating the value of alternative language qualifications.

An appropriate next step would surely be to explore the ways in which the factors of positive impact identified in this study might be adapted for the mainstream languages classroom, and to continue to push for the most appropriate ways in which almost all learners could gain from studying a foreign language at KS4.

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